



SEPTEMBER 2024

Branches Newsletter



Join us for Worship Sundays at 9:30AM

Engage and **Inspire** all generations to **Connect**
with God through love and service.

Newsletter Highlights

God's Loose in the
Neighborhood -
Sermon Series

Rally Sunday

All Ministry Meeting

New Member Brunch

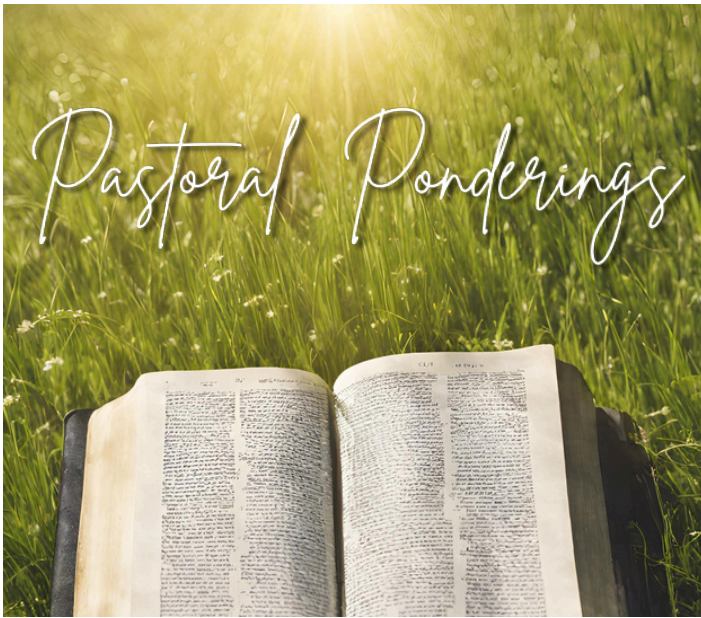
Parent Support
Group

**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
OCONOMOWOC**

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✉ uccoffice@oconomowocucc.org



by Pastor Matt

Big dreams. Anything can happen. The possibilities are endless. The horizon is wide open. It is the beginning of the school year. If you are a high school senior, the school year 2024-25 is YOUR year. If you are heading into kindergarten, this school year is the first of many to come, and more amazing things are heading your way than you can begin to imagine. If you are a parent, the new school year is a time marker, a chance to write more checks, an opportunity for another first-day-of-school photo. And, after a deep breath, it is the time to take a running leap into *The Schedule* once again.

Here at First Congregational, all kinds of things boot-up this month. Music groups have already begun rehearsals. Hearts and Hands Preschool revs up. With **Rally Day on September 8**, Sunday School kicks off. On **September 15**, we are hosting a brunch for all who have become members of the church in the last 18 months or so. Also on the **15th**, a new (and wide-open) Parent Support Group meets after worship, as a way for folks to connect around the challenges and victories of navigating the parent-journey in “interesting times.” And there is so much more – read through the “Branches” for a more complete picture of all the things!

Our church’s Mental Health Task Force is developing ways for us to support each other and our wider community in the mental health challenges that are very real for so many in these times. With September being Suicide Prevention month, I ask first that we each try to be especially aware of the folks around us and check-in with them, with an open, non-invasive curiosity. Connection is life. Our Task Force will be bringing new opportunities for conversation and support as we go deeper into the fall.

Mini sermon series:

God's Loose in the **NEIGHBORHOOD**

I also invite you to join us for a mini sermon series on **Sundays in September – the 8th, 15th, and 22nd. God’s LOOSE in the Neighborhood!** will help us see ways that God seeks us – you and me, personally, for real - in the everyday places where our days unfold, and brings new life where often we least expect it.

When Jesus said “*I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly*” (John 10:10), he did not mean the toys, the accomplishments, the account balances, the list. He meant the LIFE. And he meant it for ALL people - which includes you and me. Personally. For real.

September is a time of big dreams and endless possibilities. Let one of those possibilities be the feeding of the LIFE within you and yours. It’s a wild time, and we look forward to you joining us for the ride!

Moderator Musings

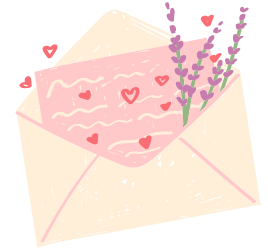
Dog Days of Summer

As I sit in front of my computer on a beautiful summer morning (this is why we put up with winter in Wisconsin) I am reminded of all our fellow church members who continue God’s work despite all the seasonal distractions available. Just a brief shout out to:

- Those working on the Golf Outing. There is a lot of behind the scenes work involving a lot of time and dedication.
- Those who volunteer on the Saturday “work days” addressing church maintenance and landscaping.
- Those that volunteer for the church mission trip (really Amy, Mississippi in July).
- Those that contribute to the outdoor worship services.
- Those that mow the lawn (did you know that it takes 4-hours just to mow the front lawn).
- Those that do all the other things that keep our church functioning, open, and relevant in this crazy, mixed up world.

Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Chris Mol
 Moderator, First Congregational UCC of
 Oconomowoc



A note from Lake Area Free Clinic -

Dear Friends at First Congregational United Church of Christ,

I can’t thank you enough for your incredibly generous donation to Lake Area Free Clinic. Your support makes a difference in the lives of those we serve, who struggle with access to dental and medical services.

Thank you for your part in serving those in need.



Agape Concert Sunday, October 6th at 4:00PM

Invite a friend to our special guest concert on **Sunday, October 6th at 4:00** – the nationally famous Agape Ringers from Chicago will be performing in OUR sanctuary a FREE concert. This is a rare chance to hear one of the best handbell groups in the country – playing seven octaves of chimes and bells (we own a mere 5) and performing at the highest level of musicianship you will hear a handbell group can achieve. Spread the news – and check them out at agaperingers.org, or on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/agaperingers).



All Ministry Meeting

September 17 at 5:30PM



All are invited to have lunch and socialize at Rockwell’s Restaurant (Shorehaven north Campus) The 2nd & 4th Tuesday of each Month
Menu Options are \$15 each

Tuesday, September 10

(RSVP to Sue Zajac by Monday 9/2)

Patty Melt: on Rye bread with Swiss cheese, griddled onions, a side of brown mustard, fresh fruit, and a chocolate chip cookie.

Greek Chicken Salad: Chopped Romaine lettuce, tomatoes, cucumbers, red onions, Feta cheese and a side of Italian dressing, with a chocolate chip cookie.

Tuesday, September 24

(RSVP to Sue Zajac by Monday 9/16)

Crispy Chicken Wrap: with fried chicken strips, lettuce, tomato, onion, bacon and Ranch dressing, served with fresh fruit and a pecan brownie.

Oriental Salmon Salad: Chopped greens, Napa cabbage, pea pods, carrots, cucumbers, grilled chicken, crispy wontons and Sesame Lime dressing, served with a pecan brownie.

Reserve your spot for a good time!

During Fellowship or call/text Sue Zajac at 414-698-3575. At each meal your cash will be collected by Sue Zajac (or designee) in order to make one payment for the group. Sorry no checks or credit cards—CASH ONLY.

Scrip: Coming Soon to a Fellowship Hall Near You!

Coming soon! Scrip sales will resume Sunday mornings after worship on the 2nd and 4th Sunday of each month starting on September 8 (Rally Day). Scrip is always available for purchase in the church office during regular office hours. If you want something that is not available, please let Cheryl Hoff know and she will order it if available.



Mission and Outreach



Singing Collection

Every time we worship, loose coins in the offering are donated to a Mission Partner. The coins in the metal plates make a “joyful noise,” so we call this our Singing Collection.



September’s Singing Collection

September’s Singing Collection is for the Bethany Recovery Center in Oconomowoc. The Center is a branch of Bethany Christian Services, a nationwide organization. Bethany Recover Center is a rehab center where women can address harmful drug and alcohol use and addiction. The Center provides residential care in a small, caring environment by professionals trained in addiction, trauma and family-centered care.



Rehabilitation at Bethany is all encompassing. The women receive physical, mental and emotional care for both their addictions and their depression, anxiety, PTSD and any other mental health needs. Pregnant women receive health care and those with infants receive care and education in parenting. The care goes beyond their walls as the families of residents watch their loved ones heal and become whole once again. It truly is a wonderful organization that would welcome all forms of support. Please give generously this month and help local women receive the care and love they need.

Food Pantry Sundays - First Sunday of Every Month (but welcome anytime)

The first Sunday of every month, you are invited to bring items for the Food Pantry and put them in the baskets at the entrance to the sanctuary. These donations are delivered to the Oconomowoc Food Pantry during the week.

Items that the Food Pantry accepts are:

- Non-perishables:** food items, Baby items - diapers, wipes, baby food, formula;
- Personal hygiene items:** soap, shampoo, tampons, sanitary pads, deodorant, toothpaste, laundry detergent, toilet paper.



September 1 & October 6

Please be sure before you donate that all perishable items are within their use dates and have not expired.

New Member Brunch

SEPTEMBER

SUNDAY **15** AT 11:00AM



The Welcoming Ministry is planning a New Members Brunch on **Sunday, September 15** for new members of First Congregational UCC of Oconomowoc who joined in 2023 & 2024 and Sponsors.

If anyone is interested in learning about becoming a member of the church, please contact Pastor Matt or Amy Drewa.



Potluck

A CHURCHWIDE
POTLUCK WILL BE HELD
FOLLOWING THE
CHURCH SERVICE ON
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 6

VOLUNTEER TO BE A

Buddy

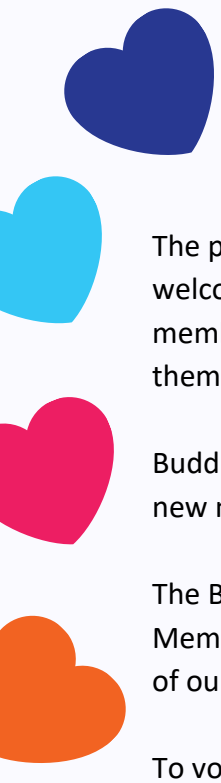


The purpose of "Buddies" for new members of our church is to assure that new members feel welcomed for the first months of their membership. We would like Buddies to accompany new members at the time of their being received into the church family on New Member Sunday and take them to and sit with them during Fellowship hours following church services.

Buddies will be available to answer questions and address concerns of new members. They will invite new members to attend church activities and events.

The Buddie's significant role will be to serve as companions for the first six months following New Member Sunday to assure that new members feel welcome and know that they are an important part of our congregation.

To volunteer to be a Buddy, please contact Linda Davis at pldvais.pd@gmail.com or 207-985-9186. It is a wonderful way to get to know new members.



Education Ministry

With our Youth counting down the last days of their summer vacation, the Education Ministry Committee is preparing for the return of our families.

Building on momentum from last year's Sunday School, Youth Group and VBS, we are excited to see renewed interest in our programs.

Highlights of this Fall's activities include: a booth at the Farmer's Market on August 17th. Rally Day, celebrating the return of Sunday School classes on Sept. 8th.

New this year, we are starting a "Life Group" for parents and grandparents. It would be an opportunity to have spiritual conversations/support and advice about topics affecting our families.

We look forward to seeing you all this Fall and please join us Sept. 15th when we will be hosting Fellowship.



Attention Sewers!

Fall is coming. That means cooler days – perfect for resuming sewing book bags for A Book Ahead organization! **A Book Ahead was able to give books to 3000 children in Waukesha and Milwaukee counties this past school year.** We hope to reach even more kids this year. There are kits with directions in the office. Feel free to use other cotton material if you prefer. Gently used and new donations of books for ages 0 – 5 are accepted. Check out the web page at abookahead.org for more information about the organization. For more information, contact Susan Steffens at steffens054@gmail.com. **Thank you for your contributions.**





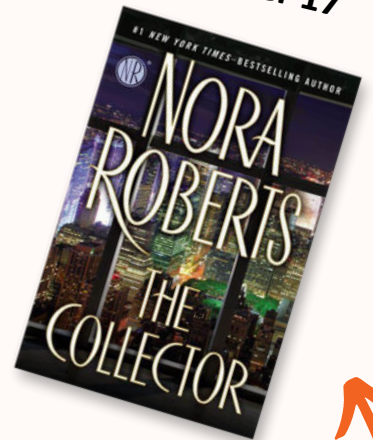
September 19



COME AND JOIN US AT OUR

BOOK CLUB

October 17



Socialize and form friendships by joining us for an immersive experience at Book Club. Book Club gives you a chance to get to know people you may never have had contact with otherwise! We enjoy reading and respectfully discussing a broad range of viewpoints as we seek to grow in our understanding of our Lord and one another. Join us to gain knowledge, creativity and community. Everyone in the Book Club gets a chance to pick a future book of the month. Come help us discover something new!

Join us at 1:00PM in person or Zoom next month. If you prefer Zoom please contact Jean Vercauteren for details.

All are welcome to join for any book and discussion.





Parent Support Group

Connect with Other Parents and Learn How to Support Your Child's Growth! As parents, we all want the best for our children and we are all in it together! This is an opportunity to come together to have spiritual conversations, and to offer support and advice about topics affecting our families. No matter your children's age, join us! Grandparents are more than welcome as well!



Meet other parents



Get your questions answered



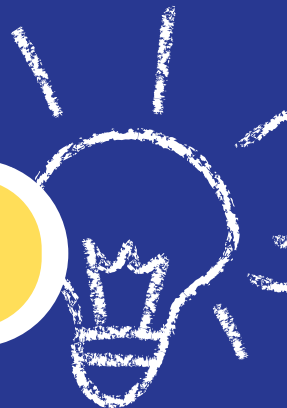
Discuss important information

Third Sunday of every month



11 AM in the High School Room

Childcare provided!





Rally Sunday

September 8

- + Blessing of backpacks/water bottles for the new School/Sunday School year**
- + Blessing of our 3rd graders who will receive their bibles**
- + Special Fellowship Hour**
- + Kids VS Adults Kickball**

Youth News

Sunday School News

This summer sure has gone by quickly!! But now it's time to get back to school and back to SUNDAY SCHOOL!!! We can't wait for everyone to be back engaging and exploring their faith more deeply. We are excited to be back together beginning **Rally Sunday on September 8** and to kick off another awesome Sunday School year!!

Typically, when children begin school, they discuss the rules for the new school year. Well....we will do the same by exploring the rules of life which were given to Moses through the 10 Commandments. Together we will explore how 10 Commandments teach us how to be God's people and to treat others through meaningful discussions as well as fun and interactive activities.

This year our Middle and High School Youth will be coming together to continue to strengthen and build relationships and their faith. Together they will explore a variety of scriptures, what it means and how something written so long ago can relate to them today. Through discussions and a variety of fun and sometimes interesting (or frustrating) activities they will strengthen bonds, their beliefs and discover new ones as they grow through the year.

We are truly excited for the start of another Sunday School year and to watch all the children and youth learn and grow in their faith and in God's unending love. [Click here](#) to register today! As always, if you have any questions, please email amydrewa@oconomowocucc.org.

Save the following dates:

September 8 - Rally Day/Kids VS Adults Kickball Game

October 6 - World Communion Sunday and Family Worship (No Sunday School)

Youth Group

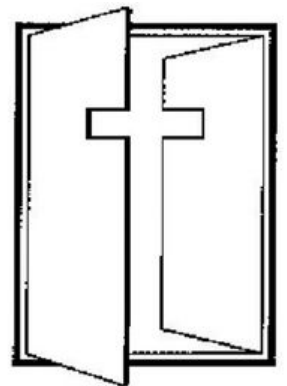
The start of another school year means the kickoff to monthly Youth Group gatherings!!! We can't wait for our youth to get together for these awesome events! Again, this year there will be two groups, a Junior Youth Group (3rd-8th Grade) and High School Youth Group (9th-12th Grade). Each group will be meeting separately once a month beginning in October. There will be service opportunities as well as plenty of FUN!! You can access the [Youth Group Calendar Here](#). There will also be printed ones available for you to pick up on Rally Sunday. Make sure you mark your calendars, so you don't miss these fun events!!

Youth Group gatherings are great opportunities for our youth to build lasting and meaningful relationships with their friends from church and to meet new people. If you/your youth plan on attending any of the youth group gatherings, please [click here](#) to register today.

Knock Knock Youth Retreat

Calling all youth in 6th-8th grade.....let's head out for a weekend to the Knock Knock Retreat at Daycholah in Green Lake **October 11-13!!!!**

Together we will discover love and acceptance as the true experience of church. Our group will connect faith to some of your pressing concerns, engage in hands-on workshops and Bible study, and learn how you can keep opening doors back at home. If you're interested in attending, please contact Amy Drewa at amydrewa@oconomowocucc.org by September 22.



HEARTS & HANDS

Celebrating ALL of God's Children



Celebrating 20 years

This year we will open our doors for our 20th year!! Thanks to all who have made the preschool program what it is today! 20 Years of making a difference to so many will be celebrated throughout the school year.

Start of the School Year

The new school year begins **Wednesday, September 4th!** Not only is this our 20th year, we will also welcome a record number of kids - 40% more than last year! In order to accommodate all of the kids:

1. We are adding the former Head Start Classroom to our program! Staff is busy cleaning, organizing, and outfitting that classroom. This room will hold our MW 3's, TTh 2.5's, and our Friday Fun programs!
2. We have hired a new staff member! She comes to us with 30 years of teaching experience plus many of you already know her! Please welcome Julie Palm to our Hearts & Hands family!!

Our weekly preschool classes are currently taking waitlists as our classes are full. But, our Friday Fun Program does have some spots available and starts **Friday, September 20th!**



The sidewalks to both of our entrances have been updated to accommodate the new classroom and larger numbers of children.



Photos of the renovation in progress. Thank-you Cindy Meckl for assembling the cabinets. And thanks Andy Meckl for helping with transporting and installing the cabinets and countertops! Thanks Sue Weber for deep cleaning the Head Start Classroom!



HEARTS & HANDS

Celebrating ALL of God's Children

Friday Fun 2024 - 2025

Register



To Register: Click the [link here](#) or QR code and you will be taken to our classroom management software, Brightwheel, where you will set up an account to register for the class.

Notes:

Classes are open to ALL children ages 25 months - 4 years old. **Toilet training is not required.**
Classes run 9-11 am on Fridays.

[2024-2025 Friday Fun Class list](#)

Class Topic	Dates	Length	Tuition	Notes
Celebrating God's Creation	September 20th - October 18th	5 weeks	\$125	This 5-week session takes the children through the creation story. God created day & night God created water, air, wind, clouds & sky God created flowers & trees God created birds & insects God created animals & people.
Thankfulness	November 15th - November 22nd	2 weeks	\$50	This 2-week session takes the children through the discovery of thankfulness :What does it mean to be thankful? What are we thankful for? What is Thanksgiving? Why do we celebrate Thanksgiving?
Christmas Friday Fun	December 13th	1 week	\$40	Join us for a special day of Christmas Fun! Christmas crafts and Christmas cookie making! This class will run from 9-noon
My 5 Senses	January 10th- February 7th	5 weeks	\$125	This 5-week session takes the children through the exploration of our 5 senses: taste, touch, sight, hearing and smell.
Community Helpers	February 14th - March 14th	5 weeks	\$125	This 5-week session takes the children through the discovery of people that help us in our community.
Our Growing Earth	April 25th - May 16th	4 weeks	\$100	Children in this 4-week session will learn that plants grow from seeds. These lessons will help the children understand that the new life we see in the spring comes from God.

Special Christmas Friday Fun

Friday, December 13th

9am-noon

Cost \$40



Join us for a special day of Christmas Fun!

- Christmas crafts
- Christmas cookie making

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Labor Day (Office Closed): September 2

Rally Sunday: September 8

Sermon Series: September 8

Ladies Luncheon: September 10 (11:15AM)

New Member Brunch: September 15 (11:00AM)

Parent Support Group: September 15 (11:00AM)

Sermon Series: September 15

All Ministry Meeting: September 17 (5:30PM)

Book Club: September 19 (1:00PM)

Work Saturday: September 21 (10:00AM - 11:30AM)

Sermon Series: September 22

Ladies Luncheon: September 24 (11:15AM)



October articles are due no later than **Sunday, September 15** to Natalie Gruentzel - natalie@oconomowocucc.org

STAY CONNECTED AND FALL INTO CHURCH WITH US

Rev. Matt Schneider-Adams, Senior Pastor pastor@oconomowocucc.org

Amy Drewa, Director of Children & Youth amydrewa@oconomowocucc.org

Karl Kay, Music Director karl@execpc.com

Cindy Meckl, Hearts & Hands Preschool themeckls@gmail.com

FOR MORE INFO VISIT US AT
WWW.OCONOMOWOCUCC.ORG